

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM. PUBLIC MEETING IN THE CITY OF LONDON.

A MEETING of the merchants and traders of the metropolis was held at the London Tavern, Bishopsgate-street, on Saturday, May 5th, for the purpose of organising an association to promote a thorough reform in the various departments of the State. The assembly was convened by a circular issued by a body of gentlemen connected with the trade and commerce of the city professing all shades of political opinion, and admission was obtained to the hall by ticket. One o'clock was the hour appointed for commencing the proceedings, but shortly after 12 the large room—estimated as capable of containing 1500 persons, was filled to overflowing; and so great was the anxiety manifested to be present that many hundred eager applicants for admittance, including several members of Parliament, could not be accommodated. In this state of things the conductors of the movement, with great promptitude and tact, extemporized arrangements for the simultaneous holding elsewhere of a supplemental meeting on the same subject, and the use of the Guildhall having been readily granted by the Lord Mayor forthwith, a medium was supplied for the expression of a large portion of the popular feeling which otherwise must have been stifled. On and about the platform at the London Tavern were Messrs. J. I. Travers, J. D. Powles, S. Morley, J. P. Gassiot, W. T. W. J. Hall, James Hutchinson, W. S. Lindsay, M.P., Norman Wilkinson, F. Bennoch, Samuel Baker, George Bishop, jun., Johnstone Neale, Captain Scobell, M.P., Mr. Otway, M.P., Colonel Reed, M.P., Mr. F. French, M.P., Mr. Maguire, M.P., Mr. Murrough, M.P., Mr. Swift, M.P., Mr. Duffy, M.P., Mr. Oliveira, M.P., &c.

At 1 o'clock, on the motion of Mr. J. I. Travers, Mr. Samuel Morley was voted to the chair. In introducing the business,

he said that perhaps he could hardly give a more striking evidence of the earnest feeling excited in regard to the great question which had brought them together that day than was afforded by the fact that, owing to the crowded state of the room, it had been thought expedient to commence the proceedings a few minutes before the time announced. He regretted to find himself called upon to occupy so prominent a position on that occasion, not, however, from any want of sympathy with the object about to be pressed on their attention, but because some kind of restraint might be expected to be exercised by a chairman in the expression of his opinions. He further regretted that the circular summoning the meeting did not comprise the names of gentlemen who had been accustomed to take the lead in political matters in that city. The absence of those names was, doubtless, perfectly honourable to the persons who had declined to join them; but, on the other hand, this departure from the ordinary routine in city affairs might lead to good in the future. (Hear, hear.) No doubt among the names attached to the circular appeared those of persons who were unknown to the general public in political matters; but still they were men who were engaged diligently, and to a large extent, successfully, in the discharge of social and other duties in the conduct of the various branches of business with which they were connected; and if they had not been drawn from their private avocations, which were in themselves sufficiently onerous, it was because they had been deeply moved at the humiliating position in which the country was placed, and because they saw that the heart of England was sick at the state into which things had been brought; and they, therefore, wished to call upon their fellow-citizens with one voice, and as one man, to declare that that state of things should no longer be suffered to continue. (Cheers.) They had thus early to entreat them to give the lie to the statements that were going about to the effect that that meeting was to end in nothing. (Hear, hear.) If that gathering were only to result in the adoption of a mere string of resolutions—same enough, in all conscience—on his honour he would not have come there to take a part in its proceedings. He came there because he honestly feared that we were drifting into a revolution, which, if unchecked, must land us in a revolution, and because, in all seriousness, he had no faith in order or peace which was not founded on contentment; and he, for one, was not disposed to say "Peace, Peace," when he felt that there ought to be no peace. (Cheers.)

Among the rumours about relating to that movement was one charging it with being a mere trading affair. This, he was sorry to say, was the tone of the last number of the *Economist*, a newspaper, strange to say, that was itself identified with a gentleman who had raised himself to the position he now occupied by those very qualifications which they wished to see more largely introduced into the Government. That journal, with an offensive and unworthy sneer, said that the discharge of legislative and governmental duties required different talents from those which commanded success in the counting-house and at the merchant's desk (a laugh), and that the people were in the habit of expecting too much from their Governments. Now it was to the intelligence, the industry, the unflinching perseverance, and, above all, the high principle which for the most part distinguished her trading and commercial classes, that England owed her greatness; and it was because they wished to see the same combination of efficiency and honesty transferred in an equal degree to the departments of the State, that they met as tradesmen to enter their protest against the existing system of maladministration. (Cheers.) Again, they had been accused of attacking the aristocracy. Now, the reputation of the aristocracy ought to be safe in their own hands; and it was only so far as they deceived and plundered the people that they should be called to account. The English people were attached to their aristocracy, and fond of the institutions of their country, but worse things for a nation could befall it than the loss of even its aristocracy (hear, hear), and he warned that favoured class not to force the people to examine and scrutinize too curiously how in days past they had been plundered and bamboozled. (Hear, hear, and a laugh.) There were those who affected to believe that the aristocracy had a divine right to govern, and who seemed to think that the common people could not be sufficiently thankful to the men glorying in the names of Cavendish, Elliot, Russell, and Stanley, who for a few paltry thousands per annum, undertook the heavy cares and responsibilities incident to the administration of their public affairs. (Laughter.) Now, the aristocracy had as much right to a share in the government as any other class, but only in proportion as they exhibited the sterling qualities of honesty and efficiency. (Hear, hear.) It behoved that meeting, then, to satisfy themselves as to the disinterestedness of the gentlemen who had convened them that day, and, if convinced of the purity of their motives, to swell their voices in tones that would be not only unmistakable, but must be obeyed in high quarters. (Cheers.) He was

bound to say that that assemblage had no direct connexion with the war, into the right or wrong, or the probable results of which, or into the fate of those who were carrying it on in our behalf, he was not there to enter; although he must, at the same time, honestly confess that he had his own misgivings on all those points. It was the hideous disclosures of the mismanagement connected with the war that seemed to identify that movement with the present contest with Russia; and even when that contest was over, the all-important question would recur, "How are we to be governed?" The weight of the public indignation might fall upon the Christies, the Filders, and the Boxers; but the truth was that there were Christies, Filders, and Boxers in every department of the State. (Hear, hear.) Let them go to any one of the public departments they pleased, and, if they chanced to meet the head of it without his intelligent underlings at his elbow to cram him they would find him displaying an amount of gross ignorance, incompetence, and superciliousness on any given subject which were actually undermining its greatness, and would, if continued, be its ruin. (Cheers.) He had received the deepest impression from reading these accounts of the frightful state of the hospitals at Scutari, and of those miles of agony (to use the expressive language of the *Times* correspondent) where thousands of our fellow-countrymen—the bravest of the brave—were left to die as though they were dogs. The Rev. Sidney Godolphin Osborne—a name to be mentioned with honour (Cheers)—by his sympathy with suffering humanity, and whose philanthropic writings were known to the world years before the war through their appearing with his initials attached to them in the columns of the *Times*—had also pointed out the utter incapacity and what was worse—the intense heartlessness of the officials who were charged with the care of the sick and wounded. But, to proceed to another point, why was it that the intelligent subordinate, when possessed of long experience and great ability, never rose to the head of his department? Let them go over the list of commissioners of customs, taxes, and the like, and they would find that in nine cases out of every ten these appointments were bestowed because the recipients were either sons, cousins, nephews, or brothers-in-law of members of the Government, or of persons having political influence at their command. Would it not be gratifying to the public to see now and then a Rowland Hill made Postmaster-General (cheers)?—an office essentially requiring a practical knowledge of business and an acquaintance with commercial matters, but which had never in the memory of the oldest living man been held by anybody but some peer, who was seldom possessed of the necessary qualifications. The remedy, however, for this state of things was in the people's own hands. There were not fifty men in the House of Commons who were thoroughly proof against the thousand forms of influence which surrounded the path of a member of Parliament. It was said that there were 120 sons of peers, and about 100 more of their sons-in-law, grandsons, or nephews in the House of Commons, making together 200, or about one-third of that assembly. Now, these men had as much right to sit there as anybody else; but the wisdom of the constituencies in sending them there was much to be doubted. (Laughter.) So long as this system went on, and the people rested content with mere noise and vapouring expressions of indignation, the Government would be only too thankful to them for allowing them to continue the system. The first advance towards the effectual remedy of the existing evils must spring from a thorough change in public opinion as to the relations between members of Parliament and their constituents. Why should a candidate go round about, cap in hand, to the voters and entreat them to do him the great kindness of recording their votes in his favour? The citizens of London should take care that at the next election there was no mistake in this matter. (Cheers.) This might be delicate ground to touch upon, but certainly upon all the testing questions of the day—those questions involving the greatest good of the greatest number, which used to engage the attention of that veteran reformer, Joseph Hume, and which really formed the only legislation worth a moment's thought—the constituents of the city of London had never bestowed the earnest consideration they deserved. (Hear, hear.)

Adverting to another point, he must express his amazement and indignation at the flippant display at a grave emergency by the Prime Minister. Lord Palmerston might be, and no doubt was, a man of consummate abilities—he might possess manners that would grace any dancing master (a laugh), but it was past endurance to find that the deep injury which England had sustained in this matter had been met with a universal joke. (Cheers.) Take any 20 speeches at random from the newspapers that the Premier had delivered since he became the head of the Government, under circumstances that had broken the hearts of thousands and carried desolation into every village of the land, and they would find that 19 of them had resulted in anything but a laugh. Such indecent levity was anything but befitting the contingencies of a solemn crisis, and he trusted that one result of that meeting would be to check it. (Hear, hear.) In conclusion, let them not be diverted from the main object for which they had assembled—namely, the formation of an association which should act upon the constituencies of the country at large, and thereby create an influence that would tell with powerful effect upon any Government that might be intrusted with the destinies of the empire. (Cheers.)

Mr. J. I. Travers rose to propose the first resolution:—

That the disasters to which the country has been subjected in the conduct of the present war are a tribute to the inefficient and practically irresponsible management of the various departments of the State, and urgently demand a thorough change in the administrative system.

He believed that the country, from one end of it to the other, would endorse the moderate expression of opinion embodied in this resolution. They did not require to look for evidence of the inefficiency and irresponsibility of the Government from without. There was not a living statesman who has not repeatedly in his speeches acknowledged the existence of these evils. Lord J. Russell had stated that he thought it a defect in our administrative system that the minister had no time to attend to any great general measure; and the late Sir R. Peel more than once said he had declined to add to the responsibility of the Government, because the Government did everything badly, and oftentimes the great man referred to the "torpid action of the Government." Sir James Graham had expressed similar sentiments, and Sir C. Trevelyan had also testified to the impossibility of carrying on the public business in an honest and proper manner so long as the House of Commons remained as it was. (Hear.) It had been asserted that the promoters of that meeting were making an attempt at revolution; but the

person who seriously brought such an accusation against merchants and traders, whose property was like sheep scattered on the hill-side, and dependent for its safety on the maintenance of law and order, must be no less than a perfect madman. (Cheers.) Then, again, it was said their design was to subvert the existing Government. Their object, however, was too great and important for them to descend to attack any particular Government or individual in the pursuit of it. They did not blame individuals for the inherent vice of the system, but, on the contrary, would admit that many of those whom public odium had been cast most unmeasuredly had the best intentions, and had only failed from want of power or from the impossibility of adapting the system to the exigencies of the moment. Nothing mean or petty, therefore, must mar the success of that movement. He should be ashamed to see any individual assailed in the city of London as he was grieved to find that one hon. gentleman had been set upon in the House of Commons the other night, for merely asserting his independent and fearless opinion. (Hear, hear.) The real fault of the present system attached to the people themselves, who tolerated its continuance. Facts convinced the advocates of that movement that in every constituency of the country there was a body of voters on the register who always remained unopposed, and who had it in their power, if they chose to exert themselves at the election, to make even the present representation of the people available for immediate purposes (hear, hear), and it was therefore the duty of the city of London, the centre and metropolis of the country's activity and intelligence, to endeavour to arouse the middle classes to a due sense of their responsibilities and their danger at the present crisis. Such was, then, the aim of the promoters of that movement, who had undertaken to put before the public a definite plan of reform, with the view of abating the evil that was at our doors. For this purpose a committee would be formed, but their task could not be accomplished unless they were backed by the moral support of the mass of the people. It was to bespeak that support that the present meeting had been called, and from the symptoms already manifested there could be no doubt that they would meet with a general response to their appeal from all parts of the country. (Cheers.)

Mr. J. P. Gassiot seconded the resolution. Whatever might have been the unbusinesslike conduct of the different departments of the public service, this one fact remained unaffected, that Parliament had liberally placed at the disposal of her Majesty's Government almost unlimited means for the efficient prosecution of the war. (Hear, hear.) Up to the time of the prorogation of Parliament in August last, it might be assumed that affairs were going on progressively well, but after that time the members of the Government did not consider it any dereliction of their duty at all to quit town, with the exception of one or two, and this, too, at a most eventful crisis, when our army had landed in the Crimea and the battles of the Alma and of Inkermann were being fought. (Hear.)

On the 12th of December Parliament reassembled, and the first movement on the part of the Government was to introduce the Foreign Enlistment Bill. That bill was opposed by Lord Derby and his party, and very unfairly so, he thought; for we were then in a position, and it was the duty of every man at that time, to support the existing Government. In reference to this bill he had a statement to make to the meeting, which he should not have presumed to bring forward had he not been in possession of the original documents referring to it. It would be recollected by all that the Duke of Newcastle, in his evidence before the Sebastopol Committee, was asked whether or not he had had an offer made to him of a force of Spanish guerrillas, in answer to which question he stated that that was the first time he had heard of such a thing. Now, he happened to know that in the last week of December an offer had been made by a gentleman well known in the scientific world, residing in Paris, a Mr. Manby, to furnish the Government with 10,000 Spanish guerrillas—5000 in three weeks, and 5000 more in three weeks after—armed, accoutred, and officered, of the best class of guerrillas, and well accustomed to the most desperate warfare, for the small bounty of £1 per man. The letter containing this offer was sent by Mr. Manby through his brother in London, to Mr. Roberts, the Under-Secretary of State for the War Department, who thus acknowledged its receipt:—

My Dear Sir—I will, if you wish it, place your letter in the hands of the Principal Secretary of the War; but at present we are flooded with similar letters, and it is only right to let you know that the details of organization do not rest here. I heartily reciprocate your good wishes. Believe me faithfully yours,
C. Manby, Esq. HENRY ROBERTS.

Nothing more was heard of the affair, until, at the end of February, when Mr. Manby, having business with the War Department, again mentioned the guerrilla affair, and he received the following letter in respect to it:—

February 26, 1855.

My Dear Sir—Your letter to Lord Palmerston has been given to his Private Secretary. The matter of your offer of Spanish guerrilla troops shall be inquired into.

Truly yours,
Charles Manby, Esq. HENRY ROBERTS.

Still no steps were taken in the matter until Mr. Manby (of Paris), getting impatient, wrote the following letter to his brother, who forwarded it to the War-office:—

Paris, 28th Rue de la Harpe, Paris, March 4th, 1855.

My Dear Charles—What can be the cause of all this delay in obtaining the acceptance or refusal of my offer to supply 5000 or 10,000 good men (Basques, Aragonese, and Catalans) to the British Government? This is at least the tenth letter which I write since you informed me that the Duke of Newcastle would give an early answer. I wish you clearly to understand that this is not a matter of business. It originated with my friend Colonel Gendard, a most gallant officer, who although a Progressive, and a great friend of Reparto, commanded the troops against the rabble during the late revolution, rescued the Queen Dowager, and ultimately saved the town from pillage. This is the officer to whom I alluded as ready to command the troops which are offered, in case his services should be considered useful, as having been for many years accustomed to such service in Spain. I repeat what I have so often told you—viz., that in my humble opinion, and judging from personal observation during seven years' residence in Spain, these guerrilla men would be of great service in the Crimea, as they are brave, active, and very brave, accustomed to great fatigue and hardships, living on such food as no Englishman would look at, and most of them good shots. In making this offer through you I thought I was rendering a service to my country, and I cannot even obtain an answer, Gendard, who has great influence in the northern provinces of Spain, is tired of waiting here, and is thinking of going to have a look at Sebastopol en passant. He has already written to his Basque friends that he fears there is very little chance of success for their proposal under the neglectful system which prevails in England, and I really regret that you should have written to me that the Duke of Newcastle would submit the offer to his colleagues in council, as he may consider our statement (and perhaps ourselves) as humbug. He has just called on me, and as he wishes to return to Spain, if there be no prospect of an early

solution of this question, I beg you to do your utmost to obtain a yes or no from the present Secretary at War without further delay.

Yours, &c.,
J. L. Manby.

This elicited a reply as follows from Mr. Roberts, which, as might well be conceived, closed the correspondence:—

War Department, March 6, 1855.

My dear Sir—If the offer of a Spanish guerrilla army came to me as a private letter, it was no doubt given to the Duke of Newcastle, and I have no means of giving it to it. If it had been a public letter it would have been upon the record of the office; but, upon reference to the register, I do not see it entered. My own recollection does not serve me with respect to it; indeed, with a small number of letters coming in every day, I may well be pardoned for not carrying all in my memory. You will readily perceive how, in an office like this, only public letters can be dealt with satisfactorily.

Believe me, yours truly,
Charles Manby, Esq. HENRY ROBERTS.

Now, here was an offer of 10,000 Spanish troops actually made to the Government, of which they took not the slightest notice, though at the same time they were complaining that the language held in both Houses of Parliament with regard to foreign troops during the debates on the Foreign Enlistment Bill had disgusted the whole continent, and that, consequently, they had not been able to enlist any troops under that Act. (Hear.) This was a specimen of the manner in which the business of the War Office was conducted. When Parliament reassembled at the beginning of the year, it seemed all at once to flash across Lord John Russell's mind that the people of England might wish for some inquiry to be made into the condition of the army in the Crimea. It was nothing for the purpose of the meeting whether or not the motion for a committee was supported by the Derby party from political motives; it was quite sufficient that, with the exception of Lord John Russell, all the Ministers opposed it. (Hear.) It was carried, however, and what a melancholy picture did the evidence given before it day by day present. (Hear.) What mortification must all Englishmen feel at reading those painful details! An army without proper food, without tents, without clothing, and without medicine; and this, too, though our mercenary marine was absorbed in the transport service, and great commercial operations were disorganized, and ships to convey these things to them. What a contrast did this state of things present to the doings of private speculation in the same quarter. At a few days' notice a single mercantile firm undertook the gigantic task of constructing a railroad in the Crimea. (Cheers.) Did they depend on the Government for their means? Not they; they chartered their own steamboats, bought their own horses, provisioned their men, and took out their own material; within twenty-four hours after they arrived they commenced work, and they completed their contract one month within the given time. (Loud cheers.) Could any comparison be more painful than that of the incompetency of Government officials with the business-like powers of a single firm—Messrs. Peto and Co.'s? (Hear, hear.) On that comparison he took his stand. There were commercial undertakings in the city of London which could vie in the magnitude of their operations and the extent of their resources with any of the continental kingdoms, but they could not expect to meet with success if they conducted their affairs on the same principle as the Government managed public service. For instance, if at any time it was found necessary that new blood should be infused into a commercial concern—for new blood was necessary at times to every undertaking—the head of the firm would look carefully to the selection of the man most competent to take charge of the particular department, and, perhaps, it might be one of his own clerks who had come in as a junior clerk; and who by his ability and perseverance had proved himself worthy of promotion. (Hear.) In the formation of a Government, however, it was generally the same men over and over again, and even when it was found necessary to infuse new blood, every man was put precisely to do that work of which he had no previous knowledge. (Hear, hear.) For instance, there was Sir W. Molesworth, who was first taken into the Government when Lord Aberdeen's Administration was formed. He was a gentleman of considerable talent, of aristocratic family, but of liberal opinions. He had devoted a long life to the examination of colonial affairs, and was thoroughly up to the mark on the subject; but, of course, he would not have done to put him in the Colonial Office, so he was placed in the Woods and Forests. (Hear, hear.) The consequence was, that there was not a more managed board at that moment than the Woods and Forests. (Hear.) Then there was Mr. Bernal Osborne (laughter)—a ready debater, and always a thorn in a minister's side. He must have a place, too; so he was made Secretary of the Admiralty, a place which he knew nothing about; and the consequence was that Mr. Osborne had the hardihood to maintain, in his place in the House, that, whatever might be the defects of the Commissariat, the War-office, or other departments, the Admiralty was perfect. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) The strong language of the chairman in reference to Lord Palmerston had evidently found a response in the feelings of the meeting. (Cheers.) Was it not notorious that the noble lord's time, ever since his accession to office, had been spent in amusing, not in instructing, the Legislature? (Hear.) On one occasion he went so far as to state that while the aristocratic classes had done their duty, while they had evinced talent, energy, and bravery on the field, all the disasters had arisen from the unbusiness-like habits of the middle classes. (Laughter.) This was received in the House of Commons with loud cheers, though a more unfounded, wanton assertion was never made. (Hear, hear.) If there was one profession more than another which was recruited from the wealthier middle classes, it was the army, for it was there that they could purchase by their money that rank which many of them so much coveted. The ranks of the army were, in fact, filled with the sons of our merchants, bankers, and manufacturers. On the other hand, if there was any branch of the public service which had been prostituted for political purposes, it was the civil service. By whose influence were the Ordnance, the Victualling Board, the Transport Board, the Customs, and the Excise filled? It would be found that almost every official in those departments had obtained his post by Parliamentary influence—Whig influence at one time—Tory influence at another—but in almost all cases it was the influence of a member of Parliament which had been instrumental in procuring the berth. A mercantile man who transacted his business on that principle would very soon find himself in Basinghall-street, and this was just the reason why the nation was served by incompetent men, while the mercantile firms got the competent people. (Hear, hear.) He appealed to every one who had ever had anything to do with our public Boards, whether they had not found in the officials belonging to them an amount of impertinent

self-sufficiency, joined to incompetency, which would not be tolerated for a moment in a mercantile establishment? (Hear.) It was no wonder, then, that, disgusted with such incompetency and misrule in the details of every department of the public service, with the prospect of a long war before it, and knowing that millions of the public treasure and the lives of our brave soldiers were intrusted to such men as these, the whole nation had roused itself, and demanded with one voice an immediate administrative reform. (Loud and continued cheers.) He was now expressing the opinion, he felt confident, of a large mass of thinking men, whose natural desire was to keep in the retirement of their shops and counting-houses, but who felt themselves constrained to come forward at such a crisis as this. (Cheers.) With but such an exception—as in a reform of the Customs was agitated—he had never before appealed to a public assembly such as this; his proper place was in the counting-house, and his pleasure was there too; but, in a crisis like the present, it was the duty of every citizen to stand forward, to speak plainly, and act firmly, and it was because he felt that the part he was now taking was forced upon him by his duty to his country and to his fellow-citizens that he had presented himself before them to second this motion. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. J. D. Powles said he had great satisfaction in supporting the resolution. He fully concurred in the remarks of Mr. Gassiot, that this was a time when he believed every lover of his country to stand forward to do his best to give effect to the unanimous expression of the national will. (Hear.) The country at the present moment for itself humiliated at home and degraded abroad; not because its resources were impaired, or that there was any want of that patriotism which had always been a distinguished element in the British character, but because its resources had been squandered and its affairs grievously mismanaged in every direction. They must apply a remedy, constitutional and peaceable, but swift, to the present state of things. The spirit of the nation, when demonstrated, would be found irresistible, because it was founded upon reason, and was not actuated by ambitious or selfish motives. They attacked no body of men and no particular Government, but an imperfect, almost a rotten, system. (Hear, hear.) The middle classes knew something of the manner in which business ought to be conducted, and, although they did not pretend to be great diplomats, or to understand all parts of the machinery of the State, they could judge of such matters as the hire of transports, the supply of stores, the regularity with which contracts were performed, and they could see that there was a lamentable want of foresight in quarters where it ought not to exist. Why was it that every foreigner who asked what they were about in England with their boasted institutions? Was it for the interest of humanity, civilisation, and religious truth that this country should cease to have that moral weight, that just influence among other nations to which she was entitled, while she never sought her own aggrandizement by improper means? (Cheers.) Administrative reform would be a work of time, and it required consideration, but it must be carried out. Some of the evils to be remedied were obvious; such, for instance, as the extraordinary unfitness of certain men for particular offices, and the unnecessary, unreasonable restraints imposed upon the choice of men. A highly respectable barrister now filled the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, but if an unusually severe winter had not prematurely, in all probability, terminated the existence of the right hon. gentleman's father, he would not have had a seat in Parliament, and the country would not have been the worse for his services. He was no reason why Ministers of the Crown should not sit in Parliament as officers to transact business. Why should they limit the circle from which the members of a Government were chosen, by saying that all ministers must be members of Parliament? Lord Melbourne's selection of Mr. St. John, a gentleman who knew nothing about trade, to fill the office of Vice President of the Board of Trade, merely because he was a member of Parliament, was an instance of the evil to which he had referred. (Hear.) They had been told to be careful how they stirred up agitation, but he thought they ought to look the evils which they complained in the face. (Hear, hear.) If they preferred stagnation to agitation—if the moderate men of the middle classes would not do the work that had to be done, let them take care that it was not done for them by others less competent than themselves. (Hear, hear.) There was only one object that the country should be so governed that it should remain in the same high position it had hitherto occupied. (Hear, hear.)

The resolution was about to be put, when Mr. A. Walker addressed the chairman from the gallery above the platform, and asked permission, as a liverman of London, to propose an amendment, as he thought the terms of the resolution were not sufficiently strong.

The Chairman said he did not feel disposed to curb an expression of feeling upon the part of any gentleman present; but this was only a preliminary meeting, and if there were anything like division among them they had better never have met. (Cheers.)

Mr. Walker then attempted to speak, but was received with such strong expressions of disapprobation that after unsuccessfully endeavouring for some minutes to obtain a hearing he tore up his amendment.

The Chairman stated that Mr. Walker had agreed not to press the amendment, on the condition to which he, the Chairman, heartily assented, that he should be allowed to speak upon the resolution. (Cheers.)

Mr. Walker then proceeded, amid continued interruption and calls to order, to argue that the Government had it in their power to bring the war to an issue as soon as they pleased by appealing to Poland and the other distressed nationalities. The uproar, however, increased to such a degree that not a word he uttered could be heard; and at last

The Chairman observed that they were not met to discuss the question of the war, and he would call upon the meeting to decide in the usual way whether Mr. Walker should proceed with his address.

A large majority of hands being held up in support of the motion that Mr. Walker should proceed, that gentleman resumed his seat, and order was restored.

The resolution was then put and carried unanimously, amid much cheering.

Mr. W. S. Lindsay, M.P., moved the following resolution:—

That the true remedy for the system of maladministration which has caused so lamentable a sacrifice of labour, money, and human life, is to be sought in the introduction of enlarged experience and practical ability into the service of the State; that the exclusion of those who possess in a high degree the practical qualities necessary for the direction of affairs in a great commercial country is a reflection upon its intelligence and a betrayal of its interests; that while we declaim every day of excluding the aristocracy from participation in the councils of the Crown, we feel it our duty to protest against the pretensions

of any section of our community to monopolize the functions of administration.

The hon. gentleman said, he should have preferred remaining a silent looker-on—a worker rather than a speaker in the cause, if it had been possible. He had already been a worker, for he had done a great deal, in conjunction with his friends Mr. Travers and Mr. Morley, in obtaining their presence at that meeting. Why had he done so? Simply because he had felt the necessity of some movement in this matter; he had felt that necessity not merely as a member of Parliament, but also as a merchant of the city of London. (Hear.) It was in his latter capacity that he now addressed them, for he had sat in the House of Commons as a member and had been ashamed and amazed as a merchant—at the frivolous answers which the noble lord at the head of the Government gave to questions all-important to every person in the country. (Cheers.) 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Men of business thought it strange that, while they were able to span England with gigantic undertakings, to construct railways, to tunnel through mountains, to send their ships to every part of the world, the harbingers of peace, civilization, and Christianity, while they had made England what she was (for to whom did England owe her greatness but to her merchants and her people?)—while they had raised her to the high position she justly held among other nations, those who pretended to govern them were not able to manage the affairs of the country. He would not occupy them with details, for if he did so they might be horrified, or perhaps, think he was relating fables, but he would make a few observations upon one subject which he thought he ought to understand. A short time ago he brought the subject of the transport service before the House of Commons, contending that the fleet employed, if properly arranged, could have done four times the work required, and performed it better too, and that out of the £8,000,000 that had been voted, £2,000,000 had been entirely wasted. Well, what answer did he receive to these allegations? Sir J. Graham and Sir C. Wood, though both ready enough to younce upon him, never made the slightest allusion to his charges, "the hon. member is attacking a deaf and dumb man," simply because he had ventured to question the good sense of their putting a deaf and dumb man in a position in which his duty was to both hear and speak. (Laughter.) 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